

**HB 1348 MDHTTF + TA FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amanda Rodriguez

Position: FAV



**BILL NUMBER:** HB 1348

**TITLE:** Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions - Authorization

**COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings

**HEARING DATE:** 3/31/2026

**POSITION:** FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider, offering crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking, and is a member of the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF).

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee brings together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. Its Legislative Subcommittee—comprised of representatives from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners—works to strengthen Maryland’s human trafficking laws, collaborate with legislators, and provide testimony on key legislation each session. On behalf of TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1348.

HB 1348 creates a clear pathway for mandated reporters—health practitioners, police officers, educators, and human service workers—to notify Regional Navigators when they suspect child sex trafficking or labor trafficking, in addition to their existing mandatory reporting obligations to local departments of social services or law enforcement. The bill authorizes these professionals to contact a Regional Navigator when, in their professional judgment, such notification is necessary to prevent serious harm to the child or other children, and permits this contact even without the child’s consent or over the child’s express objection. HB 1348 also authorizes State’s Attorneys and the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute violations of Maryland’s human trafficking laws, as well as any crime based on the act establishing the trafficking violation, ensuring that cases can be pursued effectively at both the local and statewide levels.

From our work across Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County, we know that hospitals, schools, and community-based providers are often the first to see indicators that a child may be at risk of, or actively experiencing, sex or labor trafficking. At the same time, Child Protective Services (CPS) and local departments of social services are already overburdened, and fear or confusion about the consequences of CPS involvement can deter some professionals from reporting or can lead to missed opportunities for intervention, particularly in immigrant and mixed-status families. In some jurisdictions, including Western Maryland and parts of Prince George's County, there are noticeable gaps between the number of children accessing services and the number of referrals received by Regional Navigators, suggesting that trafficking concerns are not consistently reaching specialized providers.

HB 1348 addresses these gaps by explicitly allowing mandated reporters to contact Regional Navigators as a complementary pathway to the existing CPS and law enforcement reporting framework. This approach helps ensure that children at risk of trafficking are connected more quickly to specialized, trauma-informed support without requiring families to navigate complex systems alone. It also leverages the existing Regional Navigator network, which is specifically designed to coordinate services, safety planning, housing, medical care, and legal assistance for child trafficking survivors across jurisdictions.

The bill's "serious harm to the child or other children" standard recognizes that trafficking-related risks often escalate quickly and may not fit neatly within traditional abuse and neglect categories. Allowing professionals to exercise their clinical and professional judgment to notify Regional Navigators in high-risk situations helps ensure that potential trafficking is addressed early, before violence, exploitation, or control become even more entrenched. In practice, this can mean, for example, that a school counselor who observes concerning online relationships, unexplained absences, and signs of control or isolation can reach out to a Regional Navigator for consultation and a coordinated response, even when they are unsure how CPS or law enforcement will classify the situation.

Regional Navigators operate using a survivor-centered, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed model that prioritizes safety planning, voluntary engagement, and trust-building. By explicitly recognizing Regional Navigators in the Family Law reporting framework, HB 1348 helps normalize collaboration between mandated reporters and specialized trafficking service providers, ensuring that children receive support that is tailored to the unique dynamics of both sex and labor trafficking.

HB 1348 also clarifies that both State's Attorneys and the Attorney General may investigate and prosecute violations of Maryland's human trafficking statutes, as well as related crimes arising from the same underlying conduct. This clarification strengthens Maryland's capacity to pursue complex trafficking networks that may cross county lines or involve multiple forms of exploitation,

while maintaining the important role of local prosecutors. A coordinated enforcement structure, coupled with improved reporting and service linkage through Regional Navigators, better aligns Maryland's legal framework with the realities of how traffickers operate and how survivors access help.

For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 1348.

For further information, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, TurnAround, Inc., and Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Subcommittee.

# **CFH JPR FAV HB 1348 Human Trafficking Reports to**

Uploaded by: Amy Farmer

Position: FAV



HB 1348 — Human Trafficking — Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions — Authorization

**Position: Favorable**

Hearing: *Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee — March 31, 2026*

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1348. I am submitting testimony on behalf of Center for Hope, a comprehensive violence intervention and prevention initiative of *LifeBridge Health* dedicated to supporting survivors of trauma, abuse, exploitation, and violence across the lifespan. Our work spans child abuse, domestic and community violence, elder abuse, and human trafficking through coordinated medical, forensic, mental health, and advocacy services.

Center for Hope houses one of Maryland's nationally accredited Child Advocacy Centers, provides hospital-based violence response teams, trauma-focused clinical care, and community outreach and education. In the most recent reported year, our collective programs served thousands of individuals impacted by abuse, violence, exploitation, and related trauma. This legislation rightly aligns reporting requirements with existing service infrastructure — particularly the *Regional Navigator program* established under Maryland law to facilitate identification, referral, safety planning, advocacy, and trauma-informed services for survivors of sex or labor trafficking.

Current reporting pathways for suspected child abuse and exploitation may not always connect victims promptly to the services they need, especially in trafficking cases where formal reporting channels can introduce delays. HB 1348 allows mandated reporters, including health professionals and social service workers embedded in systems like Center for Hope to report suspected trafficking directly to a Regional Navigator. This change:

- Facilitates earlier engagement with trauma specialists capable of coordinating safety planning, advocacy, and basic needs support;
- Improves screening and identification accuracy with providers trained in recognizing coercion and exploitation indicators; and
- Reduces barriers to care for victims who may not be identified through traditional Child Protective or law enforcement routes.

Regional Navigators act as centralized coordinators for wraparound services and multidisciplinary teams involving law enforcement, healthcare, and community partners. By explicitly authorizing the Attorney General or a local State's Attorney to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses, HB 1348 reinforces Maryland's commitment to holding traffickers accountable and strengthening deterrence. These prosecutorial authorities can work in coordination with Regional Navigator referrals to ensure that victim safety and justice are pursued in parallel.

A LIFEBRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

# CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



Center for Hope's trauma-informed services including comprehensive forensic interviews, medical care, mental health support, advocacy, and long-term case management are essential parts of recovery for trafficking survivors and structurally aligned with the intent of HB 1348 to connect victims to care sooner after identification.

For survivors of human trafficking, every moment matters in escaping exploitation, accessing safety, and beginning healing. By enhancing reporting pathways and clarifying prosecutorial authority, HB 1348 strengthens Maryland's ability to protect its most vulnerable residents, connect them to critical services, and deliver justice for crimes of exploitation. We urge a favorable report on House Bill 1348.

Respectfully,

Amy Farmer-Anti Trafficking and Exploitation Program Supervisor-HT Regional Navigator  
Center for Hope-5400 Preakness Way, Baltimore, MD 21215  
Direct: 410-469-4640  
AFarmer3@lifebridgehealth.org

# **HB1348 - Support - Everstand 3.31.26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andrea Carroll

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony on House Bill 1348:  
Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions – Authorization**  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Hearing Date: March 31, 2026  
**Position: SUPPORT**

My name is Andrea Carroll, and I am the Director of Behavioral Health Services at Everstand. Our organization is based in Baltimore County and has sites across the state of Maryland which offer residential treatment, education, and community-based services to children and families. We operate the Human Trafficking Regional Navigator Program (RNP) for Anne Arundel County and a specialized residential program for female adolescent survivors of sex trafficking in Baltimore County.

I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of Everstand to **request your support of HB1348**, which will allow an additional pathway for child survivors of human trafficking to be connected to the support and services of our state's Regional Navigator Programs.

As it stands, Regional Navigators across the state hear from mandated reporters in schools, hospitals, and other healthcare settings that while their reporting responsibility to Child Protective Services (CPS) or local law enforcement is clear, their ability to report directly to RNPs is less so, resulting in reports to CPS or law enforcement only. While CPS and law enforcement are mandated to refer suspected trafficking cases to RNPs, this process adds an extra step and extra time. **We need to reduce barriers so that child survivors of trafficking get access to care as quickly as possible.**

HB1348 addresses this issue by explicitly allowing mandated reporters to contact Regional Navigators directly, in addition to their required report to CPS or law enforcement. This would create a process for children at risk of trafficking to access services and support more quickly, and **it would ensure that services provided by the Regional Navigators are more comprehensive** as they could include the support of the reporter in whatever setting they encounter the child (e.g. school, hospital, therapy).

**Timely access to care and warm hand-offs lead to better outcomes for children who have experienced trafficking.** We urge you to vote favorably on HB1348 to create a pathway for mandated reporters to refer to and work directly with Regional Navigator Programs to ensure the best possible outcomes for children at risk for and who are survivors of human trafficking.

Sincerely,



Andrea Carroll, LCPC  
Director of Behavioral Health Services  
Everstand  
acarroll@everstand.org

# **HB1348\_Human\_Trafficking\_Reports\_to\_Regional\_Navig**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR HB1348**  
**Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions -**  
**Authorization**

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Embry

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1348 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Silence allows for so much harm. So many times, when horrible crimes of abuse have been uncovered, particularly against children, people knew or suspected something was wrong and never spoke up, allowing the abuse to continue on and on.

These are the times that we rely on health practitioners, police officers, teachers, and others to speak up and report what they see or suspect to people who can investigate, even without the consent of the child over the objections of a child.

This bill, if enacted, would ask those people to say something to a Regional of suspected sex trafficking or labor trafficking if, in the professional judgment of that person, notification is necessary to prevent serious harm to the child or other children. It also requires a State's Attorney or the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute any violation they discover.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

# **HB1348 CPMC FAV JPR.pdf**

Uploaded by: Diana Philip

Position: FAV

## THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

*Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.*



### **HB1348 - Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions - Authorization**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**March 31, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to educate and promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable report on HB1348 - Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions – Authorization.**

HB 1348 creates a clear pathway for mandated reporters—health practitioners, police officers, educators, and human service workers—to notify Regional Navigators when they suspect child sex trafficking or labor trafficking, in addition to their existing mandatory reporting obligations to local departments of social services or law enforcement. The bill authorizes these professionals to contact a Regional Navigator when, in their professional judgment, such notification is necessary to prevent serious harm to the child or other children and permits this contact even without the child's consent or over the child's express objection.

It has come to our attention that not all reports being made across the state regarding children at risk of trafficking are also resulting in referrals made to these Regional Navigators. Contact made to these specialized entities help ensure that these children are connected more quickly to trauma-informed support without requiring families to navigate complex systems alone as well as safety planning, housing, medical care, and legal assistance.

HB1348's "serious harm to the child or other children" standard recognizes that trafficking related risks often escalate quickly and may not fit neatly within traditional abuse and neglect categories. Allowing professionals to exercise their clinical and professional judgment to notify Regional Navigators in high-risk situations helps ensure that potential trafficking is addressed early, before violence, exploitation, or control become more entrenched. In practice, this means that mandatory reporters can reach out to a Regional Navigator for consultation and a coordinated response, even when they are unsure how CPS or law enforcement will classify the situation. By explicitly recognizing Regional Navigators in the Family Law reporting framework, HB1348 helps normalize collaboration between mandated reporters and specialized trafficking service providers, ensuring that children receive support that is tailored to unique dynamics of both sex and labor trafficking.

It is for these reasons that the **CPMC urges a favorable report on HB1348 - Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions – Authorization.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include – the American Academy of Pediatrics - Maryland Chapter, Child Justice, Center for Hope, Citizen's Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA - Baltimore County), Everstand, The Family Tree, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers – MD (NASW), the State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN), TurnAround, Inc., and individual members of the coalition.

*The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children*

[www.protectmarylandschildren.org](http://www.protectmarylandschildren.org) [admin@protectmarylandschildren.org](mailto:admin@protectmarylandschildren.org)

1014 W 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 103, Baltimore, MD 21211

# **Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAV\_HB1348\_SenateCros**

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

**March 31, 2026**

**House Bill 1348**

**Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions -  
Authorization  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**House Bill 1348** authorizes mandated reporters to report suspected labor trafficking or sex trafficking of a child to a regional navigator; and authorizing the Attorney General or a State's Attorney to investigate and prosecute human trafficking.

Maryland's central location makes it a significant hub for human trafficking, serving as both a pass-through state and a destination for traffickers. Traffickers frequently utilize Maryland's extensive transportation network, including major highways like Interstate 95, to connect victims to large East Coast cities such as New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> Incidents of sex trafficking have been identified at Maryland truck stops, with data from the National Human Trafficking Resource Center indicating that approximately 70% of trafficking cases in the U.S. occur at truck stops.

By allowing trained professionals to notify regional navigators when trafficking is suspected—especially in situations where a child may be too fearful or manipulated to consent—this legislation prioritizes child safety. Victims of trafficking are often under coercion, threats, or psychological control, which can prevent them from seeking help on their own. Empowering mandated reporters to act swiftly can interrupt exploitation and connect children to protective services and specialized support.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mdhumantrafficking.org/maryland>

Pope Leo has stated, “Ultimately, the violence of human trafficking can be overcome only through a renewed vision that beholds every individual as a beloved child of God.”<sup>2</sup> House Bill 1348 represents an important step in confronting exploitation by strengthening identification, coordination, and response efforts. By equipping professionals with clearer authority and tools to intervene, the bill advances Maryland’s commitment to protecting vulnerable children and combating human trafficking.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 1348**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2026-02/pope-leo-xiv-world-day-against-human-trafficking-message.html#:~:text=Pope%20Leo%20said%20the%20same,of%20God%2C%E2%80%9D%20he%20said>

**HB 1348 - MNADV - FAV - Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laure Ruth

Position: FAV



**BILL NO:** House Bill 1348  
**TITLE:** Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions - Authorization  
**COMMITTEE:** **Judicial Proceedings – cross over**  
**HEARING DATE:** March 31, 2026  
**POSITION:** **FAVORABLE**

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The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that works to lead diverse community partners toward the common purpose of reducing the occurrence and impact of intimate partner violence. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1348.**

HB 1348 provides a life-saving bridge between frontline professionals and the specialized experts equipped to handle child exploitation. By creating a direct channel for mandated reporters—including teachers, clinicians, and law enforcement—to engage Regional Navigators, this bill ensures that suspected sex and labor trafficking are met with an immediate, expert response. Critically, it empowers these professionals to use their best clinical judgment to intervene in high-risk situations, ensuring a child’s safety remains the primary objective even in the most complex circumstances.

We know there is a disconnect in our current system. For example, in western Maryland and Prince George’s County, the data tells a troubling story: many children are suffering in the shadows, with trafficking cases going unreported to the very specialists trained to help. HB 1348 closes this gap. By moving beyond a "one-size-fits-all" reporting model and integrating Regional Navigators into the Family Law framework, we normalize a collaborative, trauma-informed approach. This bill isn't just about reporting; it’s about ensuring that every child trapped in exploitation is met with a survivor-centered safety plan before the cycle of violence becomes unbreakable.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 1348.**

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For further information contact Laure Ruth ■ Public Policy Director ■ 301-852-3930 ■ [lruth@mnadv.org](mailto:lruth@mnadv.org)

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Tel: 301-429-3601 ■ E-mail: [info@mnadv.org](mailto:info@mnadv.org) ■ Website: [www.mnadv.org](http://www.mnadv.org)

## **Trafficking - regional navigators - testimony - 2**

Uploaded by: Lisae C Jordan

Position: FAV



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**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

P.O. Box 8782  
Silver Spring, MD 20907  
Phone: 301-565-2277  
www.mcasa.org

For more information contact:  
Lisae C. Jordan, Esquire  
443-995-5544

**Testimony Supporting House Bill 1348**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
March 31, 2026

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes the State's seventeen rape crisis centers, law enforcement, mental health and health care providers, attorneys, educators, survivors of sexual violence and other concerned individuals. MCASA includes the Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI), a statewide legal services provider for survivors of sexual assault. MCASA represents the unified voice and combined energy of all of its members working to eliminate sexual violence. We urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to report favorably on House Bill 1348.

**House Bill 1348 – Human Trafficking Regional Navigators**

Maryland's Regional Navigators operate using a survivor-centered, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed model for youth under age 24 who are suspected or actively being trafficked. These specialized professionals prioritize safety planning, voluntary engagement, and trust-building. HB 1348 helps normalize collaboration between mandated reporters and specialized trafficking service providers, ensuring that children receive support that is tailored to the unique dynamics of both sex and labor trafficking.

HB 1348 creates a clear pathway for mandated reporters—health practitioners, police officers, educators, and human service workers—to notify Regional Navigators when they suspect child sex trafficking or labor trafficking, in addition to their existing mandatory reporting obligations to local departments of social services or law enforcement. The bill authorizes these professionals to contact a Regional Navigator directly when, in their professional judgment, such notification is necessary to prevent serious harm to the child or other children, and permits this contact even without the child's consent or over the child's express objection.

This bill addresses concerns by various professionals that notifying Regional Navigators is not permitted or in contradiction of confidentiality laws governing their role. It prioritizing the needs of minors who are suspected of being trafficked and helps ensure their safety.

HB 1348 addresses gaps in services and referrals by explicitly allowing mandated reporters to contact Regional Navigators directly as a complementary pathway to the existing CPS and law enforcement reporting framework. This approach helps ensure that children at risk of trafficking

are connected more quickly to specialized, trauma-informed support without requiring families to navigate complex systems alone. It also leverages the existing Regional Navigator network, which is specifically designed to coordinate services, safety planning, housing, medical care, and legal assistance for child trafficking survivors across jurisdictions.

The bill's "serious harm to the child or other children" standard recognizes that trafficking-related risks often escalate quickly and may not fit neatly within traditional abuse and neglect categories. Allowing professionals to exercise their clinical and professional judgment to notify Regional Navigators in high-risk situations helps ensure that potential trafficking is addressed early, before violence, exploitation, or control become even more entrenched.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Judicial Proceedings Committee to  
report favorably on House Bill 1348**

# **HB1348 - crossover bill - FAV - Human Trafficking**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB1348\_Crossover\_Bill\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

03/312026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON CROSSOVER BILL HB#1348- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions – Authorization**

**TO:** Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of crossover bill HB#1348, **Human Trafficking - Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions – Authorization**

This bill establishes circumstances under which reporting must occur on suspected labor trafficking or sex trafficking of a child empower the States Attorney or Attorney General to investigate the failure to report and the actual trafficking offense.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, including any law on privileged communications, each health practitioner, police officer, educator, or human service worker, acting in a professional capacity in this state who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect:

- shall notify the local department or the appropriate law enforcement agency

if acting as a staff member of a hospital, public health agency, childcare institution, juvenile detention center, school, or similar institution:

- shall immediately notify and give all information required ... to the head of the institution or the designee of the head
- and may notify a regional navigator ...of suspected sex trafficking or labor trafficking:

if, in the professional judgment of the reporter, ... notification is necessary to prevent serious harm to the child or other children.

An individual authorized to notify a regional navigator ... may notify the regional navigator

- without the consent of the child
- and over the express objection of the child.

This important bill will authorize mandated reporters to report suspected labor trafficking or sex trafficking of a child to a regional navigator; and authorize the Attorney General or a State's Attorney to investigate and prosecute human trafficking. We can and must protect children.

**I respectfully request this committee to return a favorable report on crossover bill HB#1348.**

# **HB1348-Testimony\_ University-of-Maryland-SAFE-Cente**

Uploaded by: Sophie Aron

Position: FAV



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
**SAFE CENTER**  
FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS  
MPOWERING THE STATE

SUPPORT, ADVOCACY, FREEDOM, AND EMPOWERMENT CENTER

**BILL NUMBER:** House Bill 1348

**TITLE:** Human Trafficking – Reports to Regional Navigators and Prosecutions – Authorization

**COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings Committee

**HEARING DATE:** March 31th, 2026

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

The University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom, and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors is a comprehensive services, research, and advocacy center for human trafficking survivors. Our mission is to provide survivor-centered and trauma-informed services that empower sex and labor trafficking survivors to heal and reclaim their lives, and to prevent trafficking and better serve survivors through research and policy advocacy. Since 2016, the SAFE Center has provided specialized wrap-around legal, social, crisis intervention, mental health, and economic empowerment services to over 600 human trafficking survivors and their family members in Maryland.

The SAFE Center is an initiative of the University of Maryland Strategic Partnership: MPowering the State – a collaboration between the University of Maryland, Baltimore and the University of Maryland, College Park. We are part of the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

The SAFE Center has served as the Regional Navigator for Montgomery County since 2019 and for Prince George's County since 2020. As Regional Navigator, we provide screening for trafficking, direct comprehensive services, and trafficking prevention programs. We also work in the community to provide human trafficking awareness trainings to local youth-serving partners, such as the Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Social Services, high schools in both counties, and nonprofit partners such as Liberty's Promise.

The SAFE Center's Regional Navigator services have facilitated long-term growth, development, and healing for youth. This includes justice involved youth who had never before been identified as being at risk of or having suffered from trafficking. For example, for one such youth who was subject to trafficking at age 15, we provided long-term intensive case management, helping her and her family access mental health resources, advocating for her to finish high school, and connecting her with additional school resources. We worked with her until she graduated high school, empowering her to start to build her future.

The Regional Navigator program is a very important resource for at risk or trafficked youth in Maryland. HB1348 would create an additional avenue for vulnerable youth to receive access to services available in each county. HB1348 would permit Maryland's healthcare practitioners, police officers, educators, and human service workers to directly notify Regional Navigators of suspected sex trafficking or labor trafficking cases.

By establishing additional pathways for referring cases to Regional Navigators, more at-risk and trafficked youth will receive access to services that create a path out of trafficking. This will better effectuate the goals of the Regional Navigator program and maximize our collective impact.

Many youth-serving professionals are overburdened, including mandatory reporters. As a result of HB1348, youth-serving professionals will be able to more immediately respond to trafficking concerns by contacting specialized service providers like the SAFE Center.

For these reasons, **the University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors urges a favorable report on House Bill 1348.**

Sincerely,

Sophie Aron  
Policy, Advocacy, and Development Manager  
University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors

Susan Esserman  
Founder and CEO  
University of Maryland SAFE Center for Human Trafficking Survivors